

FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM OF ISRAEL

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1)) MONEY? WHAT FOR?

("Mivrak", 7.9.48.))

The Ministry of Finance has an easy task in proving the necessity of increased taxation.

All it has to do is to open its ledgers and let loose a stream of figures: that much for war, that much for the maintenance of administration etc. The difference between the sum total of various expenditures and the sum total of revenues represents the deficit. To cover it the screws of the tax-collection machine must be tightened and a few more millions squeezed out of the nation.

What good patriot will dispute the figures or deny the necessity of carrying on the war and keeping the machinery of the state going?

The Finance Minister, forearmed with lists of impressive figures, has quite an easy job to do. It is with regret that, in obedience to our duty, we have to raise difficulties and to ask the Provisional Government in general a few questions.

Are the funds collected properly and sensibly expended? Are all expenditures absolutely necessary or justified? Is there no way to make some economies? Is there a justification for such an inflated budget?

Only two days ago we expressed the opinion that the war budget was actually a truce budget. That political mistake is costly not only from the political standpoint. It has become an economic burden that we shall not be able to bear indefinitely. But for the truce we would have had a victorious war behind us.

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The army could be put on a peace footing, tens of thousands of young men could be released to devote their energies to productive work. There would be no menace of a surprise attack in near future, for our army would be able to defeat any Arab force. The treasury would be saving millions and economic life would flourish.

All truce expenditure is neither sensible nor justifiable. The truce itself being absolutely unnecessary, how could it be otherwise?

No less unreasonable are administrative expenses. Our administrative machinery has swollen out of all proportion with the real needs of a state the size of Israel. The machinery does little work. Appointments are made not on the basis of personal ability and qualifications, but on the grounds of candidates' party affiliations. To compensate for inefficiency arising out of lack of proper training among officials, more officials are appointed. All parties participating in the coalition Government observe in this respect the principle of 'do ut des'.

The number of Government officials has already attained surprising proportions. Their salaries, however, are on a very modest scale, generally insufficient to support them and their families. Corruption on truly Levantine lines is the only possible outcome of such a system.

The budget proposed by the Finance Minister does not provide for reconstruction or development. The expenses are not justifiable, they are caused mainly by a wrong policy and incapable conduct of affairs of the state.

So long as the policy remains unchanged, so long as there is no capable and efficient administration, so long as the Government has not proved that the money is needed for the conduct of war of liberation or for the purposes of reconstruction and development - there is no justification for increased taxation.

The public has an opportunity to determine the direction of the future development of the State, whether it is to become a fighting and creating State or a hatching nest of degenerate bureaucracy.

The Provisional Government is creating a bureaucratic regime that is hardly likely to inspire the nation with the spirit of heroism and self-sacrifice.

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The tax-payer, who has not yet become a member of the inefficient bureaucracy, is asking:

"If my money is not properly expended, then what I am working for?"

2)) PRICE OF FOLLY.

(Broadcast 7.9.48.)

So far the truce has been a scandal; now its cumulative effects are assuming proportions of a disaster. The two months of truce have almost wiped out all the gains of the second round of battle. Although the front lines have changed but little, although Ramleh, Lydda, Nazareth and Western Galilee are still in our hands, it would be a grave error not to see what is going on beneath the surface.

The army's morale has hardly improved during the two months of truce. The soldier is puzzled by the action of politicians. He sees the cynical bargaining, barter and negotiations over the values, for the sake of which he has been called to banner. He too is becoming cynical. During the long nights of truce he has ample time to figure out what is and what is not his interest. He understands that the Government is ready to cede any moment all liberated areas, outside the partition scheme limits, in exchange for UNO membership. The young soldier, expected to be ready to give up his life, asks himself: Is not that betrayal of the fallen? Did young fighters give up their lives that desert herdsmen should graze goats on their graves? Were the lives lost on the Latrun approaches and along the road to Jerusalem sacrificed in vain? The pronouncements of statesmen and Government spokesmen echo: in vain, in vain.

No wonder that the soldier draws such conclusions. As a result best men, battle-tried veterans, shun combat duties and seek refuge in administrative functions. The situation could be yet saved by giving clear definition of our war aims and terminating the truce. But if a few more weeks are allowed to slip by, it will be too late. The miracles of Lydda, Ramleh, Acre and Nazareth will not happen again.

In the two months of truce all the political prestige earned by military successes has been lost. For two months Arab bands have been perpetrating attacks in the Negev, Jerusalem, in Latrun and Kefar-Sava sectors. Their depredations have remained unpunished. The belief again is prevalent that Jews are weak and can be molested with impunity. Self-restraint in the hope of getting prize for good conduct bears no fruit for, for formal reasons, Observers invariably find that Israel is to blame.

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In the two months of truce we have already reached our economic limit. Important branches of economy have been crippled. The whole nation lives not on its earnings, but on capital. The truce is gnawing at the very roots of our economy. The truce costs us more than war, for war would give us a quick decision, while the truce is a prolonged disease that can end only in our utter destruction.

Bernadotte is now back, plotting and scheming with a redoubled energy. He has succeeded in demilitarizing one area in Jerusalem and is now looking forward towards the demilitarization of the whole city. He has not yet given up his original plan to give Jerusalem to Abdullah, but should it prove impracticable he will be still able to internationalize the city.

The Palestine problem will not come up for discussion at the next session of the U. N. Assembly. Even Britain does not seek any more to frustrate the decisions of the 29th of November, not because Bevin has changed his plans but because he feels certain that the truce will kill the State of Israel.

The truce has lasted for two months. If it lasts longer, Ben-Gurion's Government will be provisional in the truest meaning of the word, for it will be never succeeded by any permanent, elected Government. The Provisional Government with its Provisional Head will be nothing but a fleeting episode in our long history.

Does Ben-Gurion hold the same view as the French king who said "After me - the deluge"? - But there happened no deluge after that stupid king, there followed a revolution.

Perhaps we too will be saved from deluge by revolution.

"Give us bread, we have nothing to eat" - such were the cries of hungry masses in front of the royal palace in Paris, a century and a half ago; the pampered queen, who knew nothing of the life of her people, looked at the demonstrators and asked her courtiers: "What do these people want? If there is no bread, cannot they eat cakes?"

It seems that the Vice Minister of Finance, Mr. Hurvitz, was imbued with the spirit of Queen Marie Antoinette when, in an attempt to justify the increase in taxes, he said that a good meal in U.S.A. cost more than here. May be Mr. Hurvitz knows the prices and is not guilty of a misrepresentation. May be that in view of the importance of his mission he had to take meals in most expensive places. However that may be, an overwhelming majority of citizens of this country have never been

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in America. They don't want much, they would be satisfied with a simple but adequate meal, but their incomes are insufficient even for that. They cannot afford cakes, though they may be cheaper here than in the U.S. They want ordinary bread to still their hunger, they want cheese and egg, fish and some meat at prices they can afford to pay. But they cannot get them. An expensive meal is a luxury to a majority of people in Eretz-Israel and they regard its price with as little interest as the price of a private car (even if private cars were cheaper here than in the U. S.). They complain of the exorbitant bus fares and even in buses they cannot find a seat, even for buses they must waste their time standing in long queues.

Messrs. Hurvitz and Kaplan of the Ministry of Finance have no idea of the real standard of life of the population. May be they meet with those few who suffer no privations, but an overwhelming majority of the people lives in want and cannot make both ends meet because of the ever increasing prices of essential commodities.

Another cause of opposition to higher taxation, in addition to privation, is the realization that the state economy is badly handled, that bureaucracy is swollen and inefficient, that the money is wasted on the stupid and dangerous truce.

If the State Council were truly representative of the nation, it should reject the proposed bill, but representatives of parties will do nothing of the kind - their parties reap the benefits of the existing system.

So the masses will have to suffer. They may raise their voice in protest, but there will be no radical change until they rally around those who give preference to the interests of the people over those of party machine.